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## WHAT ONE ASSOCIATION IS DOING FOR ITS MOTHERS \*

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"IN the education of the mother in the care of herself and her baby we have the strongest weapon for fighting infant mortality." This conclusion is quoted from the 1912 Special Report of the Committee for the Reduction of Infant Mortality of the New York Milk Committee, and concerns a branch of public health work which has received much careful study and thought, has been widely discussed, and is vitally important to national welfare. Many efforts are being made to educate mothers: There are mothers' clubs, free lectures for mothers, babies' welcomes, and clubs of various sorts doing this work, and there are schools for mothers, both in this country and in England, Germany, France, and Belgium, where the mother may bring her infant for a few hours daily or semi-weekly and receive instruction in matters concerning infant life and hygiene; but it has fallen to the New York Association for Improving the Condition of the Poor to control a mothers' school that is unique in this country, at least, and I have seen no reports that lead me to believe that there is any other where the mothers come and live for a time in the school, spending most of the day in a regular, systematic course of instruction in all that concerns child life and mothercraft.

Work with mothers, to be of the most value, must begin with the pregnant woman, and as soon after the beginning of pregnancy as possible. If the cases can be gotten as early as the sixth month, so much the better. In the school just mentioned, the Caroline Rest and School for Mothers, the work begins with the expectant mother as soon as the case is reported. Nurses visit the home, note the surroundings and daily habits of the woman, look into the question of diet, clothing, and exercise, and provide for medical care if it is needed. Food and clothing are provided, if necessary, and as these women come from the poorest homes in the most congested part of Manhattan, it is almost always necessary. The visits are made regularly until the arrival of the infant and continue until the mother is able to be out of bed and about the house, when, with her babe, she is taken to the school, and that she may feel no anxiety about

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her other children, all under ten are taken with her. The husband is invited to come to the school on Sunday, and dinner is provided for him on that day. All nationalities are received. The mothers come to the school weak and almost feeble, showing the effects of poor and insufficient food, bad air, and sometimes of alcoholism, and are much in need of the healthful surroundings, comfortable sleeping dormitories, three good meals daily, with nourishment in between, which the school provides for them.

The children are given into the care of competent, experienced nurse-maids, and if the mother is willing, she may be relieved of all responsibility concerning them during her visit. They sleep in a well-ventilated dormitory, away from the mother's quarters, and eat at a table by themselves, always attended by one of the nurse-maids. The care of the infant is left to the mother, and it sleeps beside her in its basket bed. A competent maid remains on duty all night to see that the infants are not kept in the mothers' beds longer than the nursing period makes necessary, and that they are fed regularly, "by the clock," not "whenever he seems to ask for it." The babies respond to training for regular feeding far more readily than do the mothers.

For the first three or four days nothing but the care of the infant is required of the mother. She will usually, however, imbibe some of the enthusiasm of the mothers who have been in the school longer, and ask when her work is to begin, long before she is considered strong enough to do it.

The day begins when the breakfast bell rings at 7 o'clock. We insist upon a neat appearance at the breakfast table, and a nurse visits the dining-room during the meal to see that the rules are observed. One mother, not long ago, wrote a letter that was given me to read, in which she said, "We are kept so clean that it is a pleasure to look at one another." The idea may strike one as humorous, at first thought, but it is a good thing for them to have learned that it is much more of a pleasure to see a neat, clean woman than an untidy one, and we never fail to suggest that they remember this in their own homes and at their own tables.

After breakfast one group goes to the infants' bathroom, a large well-lighted and well-ventilated room, and the others to the sleeping dormitories to make their own beds under the supervision of a nurse who will tell them why it is better for baby to have his own bed and sleep alone, and how a bed can be made for an infant at low cost. She will speak of the necessity for sleep and how to prepare baby for sleep; she will emphasize the need of fresh air in all sleeping rooms; talk to them

about the care of blankets, the best kind to buy, and bring out many points on personal and home hygiene. The mothers in the bathroom have meanwhile been bathing their infants, noting under the guidance of the nurse the temperature of the room and bath, the best kind of soap to use, uses of powder, care of eyes, nose, ears, and throat. Instruction is given on the best kind of infants' clothing for the various seasons, need of daily exercise for an infant, and while the bath is being given the children are examined and physical defects, if any, noted. When each mother has bathed her infant and made her own bed, the infants are fed and put to bed in their baskets. Those mothers who have the bottle-fed babies then go to the diet kitchen to prepare the various formulas. The mothers are given individual instruction and each one is taught the care of bottles, nipples, and milk utensils. We have been surprised and a good deal gratified to find how few of the mothers who come to us have bottle-fed babies. Out of thirty mothers, the capacity of the house, we have never had more than six women in the milk class, and it is usually composed of only three or four. If the infant is a breast-fed baby the mother will have this period free.

At 10 o'clock the mothers hear a short lecture or, as we call it, mothers' talk, on some one of the following subjects: infant feeding; the advantage of breast feeding; proper food for the child after weaning; summer care of sick babies; some things essential for the nursing mother—cleanliness, fresh air, sunshine, food and drink, exercise and rest; common accidents of childhood; dangers of the pacifier; good and bad nipples; a few contagious diseases and how to recognize them. Sometimes the period will be given up almost entirely to discussion or answering of questions. To hold the interest, this instruction must be given in an informal way, inducing the mothers to feel perfectly free to ask questions or relate a few personal experiences if they wish, and as a rule they are interested and ask very intelligent questions. The course has been remodelled almost completely since it was commenced, and built up around the questions the women have asked. They have been much interested in cultures taken from the babies' pacifiers and in those taken from a finger nail, when we were talking about the great need of early training the children to wash their hands before going to the table. A cup of gruel with crackers, or cocoa with crackers, is served during this period and adds greatly to the sociability of the hour.

After this lecture the class in cooking meets with the Domestic Science teacher. For this the mothers are divided into groups of eight or ten, never more than ten, each group having four classes a week. The mothers gather around the teacher during the demonstrations and are

ever ready to ask questions and to tell of experiences they have had along this line in their own homes. They are always interested and often write to us about their first experience with a new recipe when they go home. We firmly believe that a diet-kitchen with individual equipment, the equipment approximating as closely as is possible the equipment these women have in their homes, is essential to get the best results from the work in cooking. They are given copies of all recipes used in the classes. The course consists of instruction in manner of purchasing foods and care of the same; care of cooked foods; some idea of a well-balanced diet; variety in daily diet; hot and cold weather dishes; need of fruit; use of dried fruits and their preparation; milk, its value and ways of introducing it into diet; making of typical dishes to illustrate nutritive foods at low cost.

To make the work as practical as possible, the same dish prepared in class is used on our menu for the day. If the lesson has been one on soups, and cream soup has been made, the children will have cream soup for dinner, and it is little short of funny, sometimes, to hear the criticism of the work of our poor old cook, who has prepared for one hundred what the mothers have prepared for the first time, and for a group of six. The dishes that are prepared in the class are always chosen with the thought of the need of the growing child, but the working man is considered too, for there is seldom money enough to provide two kinds of food, and the wage-earner is considered first. When one woman was asked why she gave her baby beer she said, "It is all we have. My husband must have his beer; there is not enough money for beer and milk too, so the baby must have beer or tea." So it is oftentimes with the question of food; the two-year-old must eat what the father eats; there is nothing else for him. One woman was so happy in her cooking because, as she explained, she had learned several ways of preparing potatoes. Potatoes were her husband's favorite dish and though she had been married two years, she could cook them in only two ways, boiled and fried. "I will not tell him what I have learned until I have put them on the table, and then he will be so glad he let baby and me come to Caroline Rest," she concluded.

Sewing comes in the afternoon, two classes each week for each group. The group that has cooking in the morning never has its sewing in the afternoon of the same day, but will spend the afternoon out of doors or resting. Here, too, we endeavor to get the women interested from the very beginning and, instead of commencing with hemming, basting, and simple stitches, as we did when the classes first began, the first lesson is one on the use of paper patterns, a cutting-out lesson, and each mother

is assisted with the cutting out of a garment of proper size and style for one of the children she has with her, usually the infant. The garment chosen will always be one requiring instruction in the use of paper patterns; method of putting a garment together; hemming; adjustment of sleeves; finishing the bottom and neck of a garment; button-holes and sewing on of buttons. If the garment is finished completely and satisfactorily the mother may have it, the child wearing it home. The mothers are interested and work hard to get the little garments finished. Sometimes the button-hole must be made on another piece of cloth many times before the teacher will allow one to be cut on the dress; sometimes the sleeve has to be taken out several times, but it is all done very cheerfully, and if a piece of lace or embroidery is donated, the mothers are very happy indeed and will show you with the greatest pride "my first dress." Visitors to the school used to speak of the fact that the mothers seemed to be so idle, sitting around in the solarium with nothing to do but gossip, but now they may be seen with their little dresses trying to get them ready for the teacher's inspection at the next class. While we all felt, from the very first, that sewing was a very important part in the instruction such a school might give, we have been repeatedly surprised at the number of these women who know absolutely nothing about handling a needle, and if you could see them pin a pattern on to the material for the first time, you might say that they know equally little about the use of pins. As to the using of scissors, following the line of a pattern around an armhole or neck, it is done very awkwardly at first. Let us hope that when cutting and folding are introduced more generally into our public schools, the next generation of mothers will not find garment-making so difficult, they will be more deft in using needle and scissors.

Remodelling of garments, cutting down of garments, is also taken up, and any one who wishes to alter her own garments at the school is given all the assistance necessary. We have tried the giving of prizes for the best button-hole but it was not very satisfactory and has been given up. The mothers are given patterns of all garments they have made. An exhibit of fabrics suitable for children's garments, chosen with due regard to cost and durability, and not forgetting beauty, and a model set of children's garments for all seasons, could well be used in this work.

Beside this class work, we believe the mothers imbibe much knowledge they do not consciously learn. We want every hour at the school to give them a new interest in the every-day things of their lives. If a child falls, and thereby obtains a wound, he is taken to the nurse who dresses his wound in the presence of the mother. The nurse will explain simply why it must be kept clean, why it must be covered with a bandage and

the bandage left undisturbed, but the next day and every day thereafter the mother applies the bandage, always with the nurse present.

The remainder of the day, and often part of the evening, is spent out of doors. We often have picnics in the woods, sometimes for the children, sometimes for the mothers; we never take both together. We want the mothers to get all the pleasure possible out of these things without the responsibility of watching their children. The mothers take upon themselves quite voluntarily the care of the big bowls of wild flowers we try to keep in the living room and upon the dining tables. Many a mother has said to me, "This is the first bouquet I have ever picked." They are interested in seeing who can find the greatest number of wild flowers during the visit.

Let me say in passing that if you think of starting such a school in the country, you must know a good deal about everything under the sun, not excepting the sun. There seems to be something about country air that makes city children and most of the mothers unusually inquisitive. In one short morning you may be called upon to explain the relation between improper food and bow-legs; tell why the lower leaves of the sumac turn red before the top ones; explain why certain stones are red and others gray; and tell how a katy-did may be distinguished from a cricket.

*(To be continued)*

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## ARTERIOSCLEROSIS

By RUTH BREWSTER SHERMAN, R.N.

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ARTERIOSCLEROSIS is interesting because it is not a disease which attacks the body from without, but a condition of long, slow and silent development. It owes its existence not to an accident and infection or a "sudden onset by an unseen foe"; it may have its beginning in the tissues of the new-born infant and its growth depends upon all the habits of life through the middle and later years, until that period is reached when the physical body most visibly rewards or sharply punishes its owner for the treatment it has been receiving.

Just as some families and some persons have better or poorer hearts, lungs or stomachs than others, so do some families and some persons have their arteries composed of stronger or weaker material than others. This is just a matter of inheritance and is part of the good or bad heritage which every baby receives from its generations of ancestors. But a child may be born with good arterial material and walls, and through wilful abuse of his body in later life, or by the circumstances of ordinary stren-